

“...faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things...”

# THE LOSS OF ALL THINGS FOR CHRIST’S SAKE

J.C. PHILPOT

*“Better to die than to live. [CHRIST] Mighty to save! Mighty to save!”*

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***J.C. Philpot (1802–1869)***

“I die in the faith I have preached and felt. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. O, if I could depart, and be with Christ, which is far better. Praise the Lord: bless His holy name.”

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## INTRODUCTION



*“Yes doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but rubbish, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith”*

— PHILIPPIANS 3:8,9

**EVERY saved sinner is a miracle of grace;** and I believe in my very heart and conscience, that the Lord will make every saved sinner know, feel, and acknowledge it; for he will give him from time to time such deep discoveries of what he is in the Adam fall, as will convince him beyond all question and all controversy that nothing but the rich, sovereign, distinguishing, and super-abounding grace of God can save his soul from the bottomless pit.

But though this is true in the case of every vessel of mercy, yet, as if to establish our faith more clearly and fully in the sovereignty of grace, the Lord has given us two special instances in the Scriptures wherein the miracles of his grace seem to shine forth in the most distinguished luster and glory; and as if to make the contrast greater, they are of two characters exactly opposite. Yet the grace of God shines so conspicuously in both, that I hardly know to which I can assign the preference. These two characters are one; the **thief**

upon the cross; the other, **Saul of Tarsus**. Let us view them separately.

First, **I look at the thief upon the cross**. I see there a hardened malefactor, for he was no doubt one of the gang of Barabbas, and selected, when he was spared, as one of the worst, to stamp the Redeemer's crucifixion by his side with the deeper ignominy. I trace him, then, through his life of violence and crime, and see him imbruing his hands in the blood of the innocent. I see him year after year sinning to the utmost stretch of all his faculties, until at last brought to suffer just punishment for his crimes against the laws of his fellow man. I see him amid all his sufferings at first joining his brother thief in blaspheming the Lamb of God, who was hanging between them upon the cross; for I read that "*the thieves that were crucified with him cast the same into his teeth*" (MATTHEW 27:44).

But the appointed time arrives, the predestinated moment strikes, and I see the grace of God, as a lightning flash, not to destroy, but to save, enter into his heart, as if just at the last gasp, to snatch him from the gates of death and the very jaws of hell. I see it communicate to his soul conviction of sin and repentance of his crimes, for he acknowledged them to God and man. I see how the Holy Spirit raised up in that dying malefactor's soul a faith in the Person, work, kingdom, grace, and power of the Son of God—a faith so strong that I can hardly find a parallel to it, unless in that of Abraham offering up his son Isaac as a burnt offering. When the very disciples forsook Jesus and fled; when his cruel enemies were celebrating their highest triumph; when earth shook to its

center and the sun withdrew its light; at the lowest depth of the Redeemer's shame and sorrow—O, miracle of grace!—here was a poor dying thief acknowledging Jesus as King in Zion, and praying, *“Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”* O, my soul, have you not prayed the same prayer to the same King of kings and Lord of lords?

But now I turn and see another character—Saul of Tarsus. I view a man trained up in the strictest form of religion then known, living the most austere, upright, unblemished life. I see him repeating prayer after prayer and making vow after vow, ever setting before his eyes day after day the law of Moses, and directing by that his life and conduct. I next see him, in the height of his zeal, ravaging the church of God, as a wolf devastates a fold, until satiated with blood. I see him holding the garments of the witnesses against the martyred Stephen. I view him rejoicing as with fiendish joy as stone after stone was fiercely hurled, and fell with crushing violence upon the martyr's head.

But O what a change! I see him now fallen to the earth at Damascus' gate, under the power of that light from heaven above the brightness of the sun which shone round about him; and I hear him saying, all trembling and astonished — *“Lord, what will you have me to do?”* (ACTS 9:6). **Free will**, where were you at Damascus' gate? Were you not hurrying him on to deeds of blood? Was he not doing your bidding when he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord? Did your voice arrest his hand? **Free grace**, was not the conquest wholly, solely yours?

Now can you tell me which of these two saved sinners, shall carry the palm the highest or sing the song the loudest? Can you, you saints of God, decide in which of these two men the grace of God shines forth the more conspicuously? Was it in touching the heart of the malefactor on the cross, or that of the hardened pharisee? I freely confess I can hardly pronounce an opinion, for my mind hovers between the two; but of the two, I should give Saul the preference, for to bring down the proud, self-satisfied self-righteous pharisee, seems almost a greater miracle of grace than to convert a dying malefactor, especially when we take into account what the grace of God afterwards made him, and how it wrought in him to be such a saint and such an apostle.

To show what grace taught and made him we need go no farther than this very chapter. I see here what the grace of God did in this man's heart, and as I read the blessed record of his experience as here, it poured itself forth in a stream of life and feeling from his very soul, I read in every line—I might say in every word—what a mighty revolution must have been wrought in him to make him now so dearly love that Jesus whom he had once abhorred, that for his sake he counted all things but rubbish that he might know, win, and be found in him, and that the righteousness he had once despised he now felt was his only justification before, and his only acceptance with God.

If, then, the same grace that touched the heart of the dying malefactor and of Saul the pharisee, has touched your heart and mine—and it needs the same grace to save and sanctify us as saved and sanctified them—we shall be able, at least in



some measure, to speak for ourselves the language of the text, and which, with God's blessing, I shall now proceed to open. In doing which I shall endeavor—

- I. *First*, to trace out the mind of the Holy Spirit in the expression of the Apostle—“*For whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish.*”
- II. *Secondly*, the *reason* why he had suffered the loss of all things and counted them so mean and low. It was “*the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.*”
- III. *Thirdly*, the *intense desire* in his soul to “*win Christ and to be found in him.*”
- IV. And *fourthly*, his full conviction that if found in Jesus, his happy soul would be found clothed, *not in his own righteousness*, which is of the law, but “*that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness which is of God by faith.*”

# I. THE LOSS OF ALL THINGS



The Apostle in the beginning of this chapter gives us a long catalogue, which I will not enter into, of certain religious privileges which were his by inheritance, and of certain, as were in that day considered, great attainments in religion which he had made by his own exertions, for he had advanced by great strictness of conduct to the highest pitch of legal holiness. He could say, what few of us can, that “*touching the righteousness which is in the law,*” which here means its external righteousness, he was “*blameless.*” The Apostle's meaning here is often much mistaken. He does not mean the spirit of the law, but the letter—an external, not an internal obedience—a fulfillment of the law merely as regards the abstaining from idolatry, Sabbath-breaking, murder, theft, and adultery; **not** an inward loving of God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, but a strict, undeviating uprightness of walk and conversation from his infancy upward; and as such, in, the eyes of man he was blameless.

**A.** “*Yes doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.*” But a time came, according to God's purpose—a time never to be forgotten—when the invincible grace of God touched his heart and brought down his pride into the dust. He tells us (Romans 7.) what his feelings and experience were under the first work of grace upon his heart, and what he learned and found under the sharp discipline into which he was then introduced. “*I was alive,*” he says, “*without the law once; but when the*

*commandment came, sin revived, and I died; and the commandment which was ordained to life I found to be unto death.*" (Romans 7:9,10.) He was "*alive, without the law once.*" That is, when unacquainted with the spirituality of the law and the wrath of God revealed therein he was "*alive,*" because it had not killed him and laid him dead under its curse. He could read, fast, and pray; he could run on the errands that the law sent him, work at the winch to which it tied him, and perform, at least in the letter, the tasks which it set him. In this sense, he was alive, and lively too, for his zeal was all in a flame to waste the church of Christ as with fire and sword, for he tells us himself that he was exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers (Galatians 1:14), and displayed this zeal in persecuting the church (Philippians 3:6), or as the Holy Spirit more expressly tells, "*As for Saul, he made havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and taking men and women, committed them to prison.*" (Acts 8:3.)

But when the law entered his conscience, it killed him as to all hopes of salvation by his own obedience; and when God was pleased to reveal his dear Son in him (Gal. 1:16), he saw and felt such beauty and blessedness in his glorious Person as God-Man, and such pardon and peace, acceptance and justification by and in his blood and righteousness, that all his once fancied gains sank into utter loss. He was thus like a merchant or tradesman who by some convulsion in business is ruined at a stroke. He may have on the debtor side of his ledger a large amount of money due to him for goods supplied, but finds to his dismay that all the sums he was expecting to receive, in order to meet his engagements with, are bad debts,

or more confounding still, are to be transferred to the other side of the ledger, so that he must pay where he expected to be paid. So with Saul. He was continually making his calculations, that the law owed him as a debt life and happiness, with the special favor of God, on account of his strict obedience to it; but to his utmost consternation, when the Lord opened his eyes, and the law seized him as it were by the throat, saying—"Pay me what you owe!" he found that the law was not his debtor but his creditor, and that instead of it owing him life, he owed it death. Thus his gains were turned into loss, and his profits into debts.

Now this is a lesson that all must learn spiritually and experimentally who are to know Christ, believe in Christ, and win Christ. But we formerly went the wrong way to work—we once thought that we could gain heaven by our own righteousness. We strictly attended to our religious duties, and sought by these and various other means to recommend ourselves to the favor of God, and induce him to reward us with heaven for our sincere attempts to obey his commandments; and by these religious performances we thought, in the days of our ignorance, we would surely be able to make a ladder whereby we might climb up to heaven. This was our tower of Babel, whose top was to reach unto heaven, and by mounting which we thought to scale the stars, and, like the proud king of Babylon, "to ascend above the heights of the clouds and be like the Most High." (Isaiah 14:14.)

But the same Lord who stopped the further building of the tower of Babel, by confounding their speech and scattering them abroad on the face of the earth, began to confound our

speech so that we could not pray, or talk, or boast as before, and to scatter all our religion like the chaff of the summer threshing floors. Our mouths were stopped; we became guilty before God; and the bricks and the mortar became a pile of confusion. When, then, the Lord was pleased to discover to our souls by faith his being, majesty, greatness, holiness, and purity, and thus gave us a corresponding sense of our filthiness and folly, then all our creature religion and natural piety which we once counted as gain, we began to see was but loss—that our very religious duties and observances, so far from being for us, were actually against us, and instead of pleading for us before God as so many deeds of righteousness, were so polluted and defiled by sin perpetually mixed with them, that **our very prayers were enough to sink us into hell**, had we no other iniquities to answer for in heart, lip or life.

Thus “*our tables*”—and among them the Lord’s table which we attended so constantly—“*became a snare, and that which should have been for our welfare*”—as we fondly conceived our religious duties were—“*became a trap*” in which we were caught as in the very act of sinning, and from which there was no escape by any exertion of our own. (Psalm 69:22)

But when we had a view by faith of the Person, work, blood, love, and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, then we began more plainly, and clearly to see with what religious toys we had been so long amusing ourselves, and what is far worse, mocking God by them. We had been secretly despising Jesus and his sufferings, Jesus and his blood, Jesus and his righteousness, and setting up the poor, miserable, paltry doings of a polluted worm in the place of the finished work of the Son

of God. But compared with him, well may we now say, with Paul, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."

**B.** But the Apostle adds, "*For whom I have suffered the loss of all things;*" meaning thereby not only all his creature religion and fancied righteousness, but everything else which had come into competition with the Lord Jesus.

**1.** We have to experience the same loss for ourselves. When the Lord, by his Spirit's divine operations, is pleased to make our conscience increasingly tender, planting his fear more deeply in the heart; when he condescends to strengthen that which he has already wrought in us by his power, and to bring forth the graces of his Spirit into more vivid exercise and more powerful efficiency, we begin to find that there are many things hitherto indulged, which we must sacrifice if we would maintain an honest conscience and walk before the Lord in all well-pleasing. We begin to see that we cannot hold the WORLD with one hand and Christ with the other; and that *to follow Jesus requires taking up a daily cross and denying ourselves of much which the flesh admires and loves!*

It is laid with weight and power upon our conscience that if we would be Christians inwardly as well as outwardly, have the power of godliness and not merely the form, we must part with many things which we have loved as our very life's blood. This is the grand test which distinguishes the real from the nominal Christian—the possessor from the professor. I speak from experience. I was myself called upon to make such sacrifices. It may not be your part, nor may the same necessity

be laid upon you; but when I was a minister of the Church of England rather more than 23 years ago, I was called upon to sacrifice all my earthly prospects, and with Moses count the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. I repeat it—this may not be your case, (for I am not laying down myself as an example), but I felt I could not hold my position and office as a minister of that church, because that position called upon me to say and do things which I could not say and do, without standing before the God of heaven with what I believed to be a lie in my mouth and in my right hand. I do not judge other men's consciences, but I felt I must either retain my position with a weight continually resting upon my mind, and thus mock, as I believed, a holy, heart-searching God, or make the sacrifice. I chose the latter; nor have I ever repented the choice, as I can now serve the Lord and preach his truth with a good conscience.

But all of you must sacrifice something, if, with Paul, you are “*to suffer the loss of ALL things.*” It may happen that you are placed, for instance, in a situation extremely advantageous to your temporal interests, and one which is fast leading you to a position of worldly ease and respectability. But if you are compelled, in occupying this position, to do things which gall and grieve a tender conscience—things inconsistent with the fear of God and the precepts of the Gospel, grace will *compel*, as well as *enable* you to suffer the loss of all these things, rather than live in sin, to the provocation of God, and the bringing of darkness and death into your soul.

2. But if spared this trial; if you have not to suffer in purse or position, you will certainly suffer in **reputation**. You must lose

your good name, if you do not lose your worldly advancement, or fall into a lower social position; for **no person can be a sincere follower of the Lamb and yet retain the good opinion of the world.** If you walk in the fear of God, and follow in the footsteps of a persecuted and despised Jesus, the world will hate and despise you as it hated and despised him, as he himself declares—*“If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.”* (John 15:18.) God himself has put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Genesis 3:15); and nothing will secure you from the manifestation of this enmity if you are on Christ's side. Neither rank, nor property, nor learning, nor education, nor amiability, nor the profusest deeds of liberality, nor the greatest uprightness of conduct, will stave off the scorn of men, if you are a sincere follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, and carry out in practice what you hold in principle.

You may manage to carry on a mere profession of religion, and shun by worldly compliances the shame of the cross; but to retain the respect of the world with a firm holding of the distinguishing doctrines of grace, a living experience of their power, and a godly obedience of life, is utterly impossible. You may contrive by time-serving, by concealing your real views, and by shunning the company of God's people, to escape the cross; but take care, lest in escaping the cross you escape the crown. If you are not conformed to Jesus here in his suffering image, you will most certainly not be conformed to Jesus hereafter in his glorified likeness.

But if by living for and unto Jesus and his cross, your name is cast out as evil, wear it as your distinguishing badge, your war



medal, as adorning the breast of a Christian warrior. If men misrepresent your motives or actions, and seek to hunt you down with every calumny that the basest malignity can invent, do not heed it as long as you are innocent. They cannot find you a better or more honorable crown, if indeed your godly life provoke the cruel lie. It is a crown that your Master bore before you, when they crowned his head with thorns. If you feel as I have felt, you will at times count yourself even unworthy to suffer persecution for his name's sake.

**3.** You may be called upon to suffer the **loss of relations or friends**, if not by bereavement, by what is sometimes more painful—separation and alienation. The Lord himself said, *“For I have come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.”* (Matthew 10:35.) Thus you may have to suffer in this sense the loss of father, mother, wife, sister, child—of your nearest and dearest ties; the grace of God producing that separation between you and them, as shall make them alienated to you, and you to them.

**4.** But this is not all; these are mainly *outward* matters. There is something more *inward* of which you must also suffer loss. I mean the loss of **all your fancied holiness**, of all your vaunted strength, of all your natural or acquired wisdom, of all your boasted knowledge; in a word, of everything in creature religion of which the heart is proud, and in which it takes delight. All, all must be counted loss for Christ's sake; all, all must be sacrificed to his bleeding, dying love—our dearest joys, our fondest hopes, our most cherished idols, must all sink and give way to the grace, blood, and love of an incarnate

God. And not only must they be counted as "loss," but lower still must they sink, worse still must they become—they must be counted as rubbish, as street offal, or according to the literal meaning of the word, as garbage of the slaughterhouse cast to dogs. What a strong expression of the Apostle! How great the grace, how ardent the affection, that made him so abhor himself and love Jesus!

## II. THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST



But I pass on to my second point, which was to show the REASON why Paul had “*suffered the loss of all things and counted them as rubbish.*” It was “*the excellency of **the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.***” Can we part freely and cheerfully with what we naturally love, unless we obtain for it something more choice and valuable? Is not money dear? Is not reputation dear also? Is not the good opinion of others, what men think and what they say approvingly of us, very gratifying to our natural mind? To be generally esteemed or admired, to possess property, influence, a good social position for themselves and their families—is not this the main object of most men's ambition and desire?

How, then, can we be brought to that state of mind which shall enable us to suffer the loss of all things as with holy joy, and to reckon everything in which up to now we had delighted but **loss**; yes, stranger still, to count it but **rubbish**, as loathsome garbage such as is cast to the dogs?

Oh what grace must be in your hearts to enable you to renounce what the world so madly pursues and what your own nature so fondly loves! To see all these earthly delights spread, as if in a panorama, before your eyes; the pleasures, the amusements, the show and finery of the world presented to you, as they were by Satan to the Lord himself on the exceeding high mountain (Matthew 3:8); to carry within you a nature which loves and delights in them, and yet, by the power

of grace and the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to regard them as far beneath your notice, as contemptible, and as polluting as the refuse in the street, over which you step in haste lest you defile your shoes or clothes—Oh what a deep and vital sense must the soul have of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus its Lord, and what a view by faith of his beauty and glory to bring it to that state, to count all that earth can give or contribute to individual enjoyment as rubbish and dross! I am very sure that no man, in living experience, ever had the feeling for five minutes in his soul or carried it out for five minutes in the life, but by some personal discovery of the beauty and blessedness of the Son of God. My friends, take this as a most certain truth, that we can never know Jesus Christ except by a spiritual revelation of him to our soul.

You know the words—they are his who cannot lie—*“This is life eternal, that they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”* How am I to know the only true God? Does he not dwell in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man has seen nor can see? Must he not, then, shine into my soul that I may see him by faith, as Moses saw him, who *“endured as seeing him who is invisible?”* Does not the Lord himself say, *“No man knows the Son but the Father; neither knows any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him?”* (Matthew 11:27.)

How, then, can I know either the Father or the Son but by revelation and manifestation? How am I to know Jesus Christ as God, the co-equal and co eternal Son of the Father in truth and love, but by a divine manifestation of his glory? How can

I know him as a man, and see his pure, spotless humanity, unless the eyes of my understanding are enlightened by the heavenly anointing? Or how can I know him as God-man unless by faith I view him as such at the right hand of the Father? To show us Jesus, his Person, his grace, and his glory, is the express work of the Holy Spirit, as the Lord himself declares—*“He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.”* (John 16:14, 15.)

I am well convinced for myself that I can only know him, by the manifestation of himself. I hope I have had that manifestation of him to my soul; but I am sure that we have no saving or sanctifying knowledge of the Son of God, except by a special revelation of him to our heart. I do not mean by this anything visionary or visible, but a discovery of him by the Holy Spirit to the eye of faith. And when he is revealed to our hearts by the power of God, and we see who and what he is by a living faith, then we *“behold his glory—the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”* (John 1:14.) We see his glorious Deity as the Son of God; we see his pure and spotless Humanity—how innocent, how holy, how suffering, how bleeding; and we see this eternal Deity and this Holy Humanity in one glorious Person—Immanuel, God with us—seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Thus to see him, thus to know him, thus to believe in him, thus to love him, and thus to cleave to him with purpose of heart—this, this is vitally and experimentally to realize *“the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Oh

what excellent knowledge!—how surpassing all acquired from books! You may have read the Bible from childhood—and it cannot be read too much—and may know it almost by heart from end to end; you may be able to read the Hebrew text, and understand the Greek original; you may study commentator after commentator—all which I have myself done, and therefore know what I am saying; and yet all your reading, and all your searching after the meaning of the Scripture, if continued until your eyes are worn out with fatigue, will never give you that spiritual and saving knowledge of the Person and work, grace and glory of the Lord Jesus which one five minutes of his manifested presence will discover to your soul. The light of his countenance, the shining in of his glory, and the shedding abroad of his love, will teach you more, in a few minutes sweet communion, who and what he is as the King in his beauty, than without this manifestation you could learn in a century.

If any say that to talk about manifestations is enthusiasm, I will ask them to explain what the Lord meant when he said to his disciples, *“He that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”* (John 14:21.) Does not the Lord speak here of “manifesting” himself to those that love him? Is this enthusiasm? And when Paul speaks in almost similar language—*“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”* (2 Cor. 4:6), was Paul teaching and preaching enthusiasm? The Lord give me a little more of this enthusiasm, if men call by that name the

manifestation of Christ to the soul. It is only thus we understand, feel, and enjoy *“the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

No wonder men suffer no loss of any one thing, much less of all things, for Christ's sake; no wonder they greedily pick up the offal which the so-called enthusiast throws to the dogs. But be it known to them that Christ Jesus is not their Lord, unless he has taken possession of their hearts; for *“no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Spirit.”* (1 Corinthians 12:3) When, then, Jesus manifests himself to the soul, he becomes its Lord; for he puts down all other rivals, and seats himself on the throne of the affections. He then becomes in reality what before he was but in name, Christ Jesus our Lord. We then lie at his sacred feet; we embrace him with the arms of faith; he sways the scepter over a willing heart, and we crown him Lord of all. Now it is only the excellency of this knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, as vitally felt that makes us willing to suffer the loss of all things.

Oh, what is a little money, a little gold and silver, compared with a living faith in the precious blood of Christ! *“We are not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold,”* says the word of truth, *“but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.”* (1 Peter 1:18, 19.) Oh, that precious blood! As I have sometimes thought and said, ‘Deity was in every drop!’ Oh, that precious blood which oozed from his veins in the garden of Gethsemane, when it fell in large drops from his bleeding brow! Oh, that precious blood, in which his body was bathed upon the Cross of Calvary! Oh how it ran from his hands and feet and side!

cleansing, as it ran, like an opened fountain, the Church of God from all her sin and uncleanness. (Zechariah 13:1.)

This is the precious blood which sprinkled upon the conscience cleanses it from all sin, and purges it from dead works to serve a living God. (Hebrews 9:14.) When then we thus see by the eye of faith that atoning blood, and cast ourselves, so to speak, with all our sins into that open fountain, as Naaman dipped himself in Jordan's flood, can we dare we put our words and works into competition with such a sacrifice, with the agonies and sorrows, the suffering obedience and meritorious death of the Lamb of God? In the eyes of the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, can there be a greater insult than to put man's paltry words and works in the place of the finished work of his own dear Son?

If man can save himself, why need Jesus have bled and died? Why would we need the sufferings of an incarnate God, if a few acts of natural piety can merit heaven? Men ignorant of God and godliness are too ready to set up their own works and trust to their own righteousness; but all the works of the creature sink into worse than insignificance, when placed side by side with the wonders of redeeming blood and love. Can there be a greater insult in the face of the dread Majesty of heaven, than to parade a few creature doings and duties as only a shade less meritorious, than the blood and obedience of Him who, as God's co-eternal Son, thought it not robbery to be equal with God? (Philippians 2:6.) Perish all such thoughts out of our hearts; and let us rather count all things, whatever they be, as rubbish and dross compared with Jesus and his blood.



It is not true religion, but the lack of it, which makes men esteem themselves and slight Christ, set up their own works and disregard his. When the Lord is pleased to visit his redeemed ones with his presence, they feel that there is nothing upon earth which they so much love and prize as himself. To feel his presence and love is the foretaste of eternal joy; the first sip of that river the streams whereof make glad the city of God, (Psalm 46:4.), Then they see what is “*the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.*” Then are they willing to part with all things and count them but rubbish; and those things which once they counted gain are now seen to be real loss, for they stand in the way of Christ, and hinder, so to speak, his approach to the soul.

If once you have seen and felt the preciousness of Christ, and have had a view by faith of his glorious Person and spotless obedience to the Law of God, you will never again set up your own fancied holiness. To offer such an oblation will be as offering swine's blood; to burn incense to your own righteousness will be as if you blessed an idol (Isaiah 46:3.) In comparison also with him, money, reputation, worldly honor, or any temporal advantage will be viewed as valueless indeed; as demanding affections which we can no longer give, as they are already bestowed on Jesus.

Let me illustrate this by a figure. You are a man of business, and your time is occupied nearly all the day with matters of importance. I call upon you to ‘while away some idle moments’, having no business to transact with you, but merely to pass away the time. Your time, however, is precious, for you have urgent matters in hand. I see you through your courtesy

for a few moments, but as your time is too valuable to be interrupted by mere idle gossip, you very soon say “Excuse me, I cannot give you any more time. I am engaged—I am engaged; I cannot see you now.”

Look at the figure spiritually, and see how in a similar way everything which takes up our time, occupies our thoughts, entangles our affections, and turns away our feet from the Lord is positive loss, because it robs our soul of its best treasure. If every look from him brings renewed strength, and every view of him by faith carries with it a blessing, then all that hinders these looks from him and views of him, is as much positive loss to the soul, as the merchant being kept from his business, is a loss to his purse.

What is health or rank or beauty; in a word, what are all earthly delights, with which all must soon part, which must shortly either leave us, or we leave them, compared with the Savior and with a sweet testimony in our souls that we are his and that he is ours? Only let the blessed Redeemer look upon you with that face which was marred more than the sons of men, with one glance of those languid eyes so full of the deepest sorrow and the tenderest love; only let the Blessed Spirit lead you into the garden of Gethsemane and to the cross of Calvary, there to see by the eye of faith the suffering Son of God, you will then feel how poor and base are all earthly things, and how glorious and blessed are those divine realities which faith sees here, and which God has in store for those who love him.

You will then see, also, how the best and brightest objects here below, are as little worthy of your real regard as the toys of

childhood or the sports of youth. Would you know, then, why Paul thus wrote? It was because Christ was made precious to his soul that his pen traced the words of our text, for they are the utterance of his own experience, of what he had himself seen, felt, and enjoyed in the gracious discoveries of the Lord the Lamb to his heart.

But you say, perhaps, "I am not there." No, you may not be there, for few ever arrived as far as he in the knowledge of Christ; but are you on the way there? There is a being at a spot, there is a being on the way to a spot, and there is a thorough absence of movement towards a spot. As I came here yesterday by the railway, every minute brought me nearer and nearer to the station where I was to arrive—as I go away tomorrow every minute will take me farther and farther from it. Thus it is in regard to sacred things. Some of you may be coming on within sight of Gethsemane. Follow on—follow on. You are on the way if you are learning that hard but easy, bitter but sweet, humbling but exalting lesson—to count for Christ's sake all things but loss. Every fresh trial, every fresh blessing, every new sight of self, every new sight of him, will bring you more into Paul's experience.

But there are those who inwardly hate and shun the cross, and who, with all their profession of religion, love the world and are buried in it. Every day, as their conscience gets more and more hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, they are farther and farther from the cross, and if a miracle of grace does not rescue them, so much nearer and nearer to destruction at the end of their course.

### III. THAT I MAY WIN CHRIST



But I pass on to open up, as I proposed, the expression of the Apostle, “**That I may win Christ.**” What, had he not already won him? Yes, he had in a measure, but there was that divine beauty and blessedness in his glorious Person, which his soul longed to realize in a yet greater degree of fullness. As a lover longs to win not only the love, but the person of the object of his attachment to be his own bride, and pants to clasp her to his heart and to call her his, so did the Apostle long to clasp Jesus in the arms of his faith so as to be able to say, “This is my friend, and this is my beloved, O daughters of Jerusalem.” (Song of Solomon 5:16.) “Yes; this is my Christ, my own Christ, my own Jesus, my dear Jesus, mine in life, mine in death, mine to all eternity!”

But he felt that if he were thus to win Christ, it could only be by counting all other things as lost unto him. As the groom counts all other women not worthy of a moment's thought compared with his bride, and regards and loves none but her, so it is of the soul that sincerely loves Christ.

This to some of you may seem rank enthusiasm, and to others hard doctrine. It was so to the young man who "had great possessions" and wished for eternal life, but not at the expense of following Christ. (Matthew 19:21.) It was so to those disciples who turned back and walked no more with Jesus. (John 6:66.) It was so even to Peter himself when he sought to turn his Master away from the cross. (Matthew 16:22.) But

this is the way, and there is no other; as the Lord himself told “the great multitudes that followed him”—“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26, 27.)

There is no middle path to heaven—there is no intermediate state between hell and heaven; no purgatory for that numerous class who think themselves hardly good enough for heaven, yet hardly bad enough for hell. No; there is no intermediate road nor state. We must win Christ as our own most blessed Jesus, and with him enjoy the happiness and glory of heaven, or sink down to hell with all our sins upon our head beneath his most dreadful frown. The soul then that has been charmed with the beauty and blessedness of Jesus longs to win him, and that not for a day, month, or year, but for eternity; for in obtaining him, it obtains all that God can give the soul of man to enjoy, as created immortal and for immortality.

Under the influence of his grace, it feels at times even here below, all its immortal powers springing forth into active, heavenly life, and looks forward in faith and hope to a glorious eternity, where it will be put into possession of the highest enjoyment which God can give to man, even union with himself by virtue of union with his dear Son, according to those wonderful words of the Redeemer himself—“That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us.” (John 17:21.)

Now has your heart ever panted after the Lord Jesus as the deer pants after the water brooks? (Psalm 42:1.) Do you ever lie in the dust mourning over your sins against such bleeding, dying love? Do you ever ask God to kindle in your soul an intense desire to have Jesus as your Christ, that he may be your delight here and your portion forever? Surely there is that in him which is not in anything below the skies, and which if not found here will not be found hereafter. If you have no love or affection for him, why is it but because he has not endeared himself to your soul? But if he has manifested himself to you, you have seen and felt enough of his blessedness to convince you that there is no real peace or happiness outside of him. It is true that you may have many trials and temptations to encounter; many perplexities and sorrows may be spread in your path; but be not dismayed, for the love of Christ, if you have ever felt that love shed abroad in your heart, will bear you more than conqueror through them all.

May the Lord make and keep us faithful to the truth as it has been made known to our consciences; and may the goodness and mercy of God shine into our hearts, and shed abroad its rays of light and joy in our darkest moments and under our severest trials. And O to be found in him at the great day, as members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones—to be found the Lord's "peculiar treasure" in that day when he makes up his jewels. (Malachi 3:17.) And O then where will be those who are not found in the Lord Jesus! They will call upon the mountains and the rocks to "fall on them and hide from the face of him that sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb." The Apostle, then, knowing what the

tremendous wrath of God was, and what a holy and righteous Jehovah he had to deal with, and knowing, too, that there was no refuge for his guilty soul but the Lord the Lamb, desired with intense desire not only to win Christ, but to be found at the great day in union with him, as washed in his blood, and clothed in his righteousness. And this brings me to the last point of the text which I proposed to consider, that is—

## IV. THE DESIRE OF PAUL



**The desire of Paul** to *“be found in him, not having his own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”*

Here are the two righteousnesses clearly laid down, in one or other of which we must all stand before God—the righteousness which is of the law, and the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ. But bear this in mind, that a righteousness to be acceptable before God, must be a perfect righteousness. This ‘perfect righteousness’, no man ever did or could produce by his own obedience to the law, for no man ever yet loved God *“with all his heart and soul and mind and strength, and his neighbor as himself;”* and if a man does not thus love God and thus love his neighbor, he is accused and condemned already by that righteous law which curses *“every one who continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”*

Now the Apostle felt that as this perfect righteousness could not be yielded by himself as a fallen sinner, he must necessarily fall under the condemnation and curse attached to that holy law. Trembling, therefore, in his conscience, as feeling that the wrath of God was revealed against him, and all unjustified sinners in a broken law, and knowing that he must sink forever under the dreadful indignation of the Almighty, if he had no covering for his needy, naked soul but his own righteousness, he fled out of it to find justification and acceptance, mercy and peace in the



righteousness of Christ. Thenceforth he “*was determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified,*” and Jesus became to him his “*all in all.*”

When once he had been favored with a view of the righteousness of the Son of God, he needed no other for time or eternity. He saw by faith the words and works of the God-Man, and he beheld Deity stamped upon every thought, word, and action of that pure humanity with which it was in union, and thus investing them with a merit beyond all conception or expression of men or angels. He saw him by faith bearing his sins in his own body on the tree, and by his active and passive obedience working out a righteousness acceptable to God, and such as he and all the redeemed could stand in before the great white throne without spot or blemish.

As a traveler overtaken by a violent thunderstorm gladly flies to a house by the wayside wherein he may find shelter from the lightning and the sweeping rain; or as a ship threatened with a hurricane bends every sail to reach the harbor of refuge in time—so does the soul terrified by the thunders and lightnings of God's righteous law, seek for shelter in the wounded side of Jesus and hide itself beneath his justifying obedience. This righteousness is here called “*the righteousness of God;*” for God the Father contrived it, God the Son performed it, and God the Holy Spirit applies it; and it is said to be “*by faith*” and “*through faith in Christ,*” because faith views it, believes in it, receives it, and gives the soul a saving interest in it.

Now, my friends, you who desire to fear God, you who tremble at the thought of living and dying in your sins, can you find anything

in your heart, either as now felt or as formerly experienced, corresponding to the experience of the Apostle, as I have from the words of the text this evening traced it out? If you can—and I hope there are some here who can do so—what a blessed thing it is for you to have an inward testimony, that the Lord himself has wrought and is still working this experience in your souls.

Therefore be not dismayed by the trials and temptations which may lie in your path, or be terrified at the vastness of the great deep which seems still to stretch itself between you and him. These trials and temptations will be all blessedly overruled to your spiritual good, and will all lead you to seek more and more to be clothed with the spotless righteousness of Christ, in which alone you can stand with acceptance before God. Again I say, be not disheartened, O suffering children of God, by your trials and sorrows, exercises and fears; for if the Lord see fit that his dear children should be thus tried and tempted, it is to teach them that there is a suitability and a preciousness in Christ which they never can find in themselves.

And now may the Lord, if it be his gracious will, bless to your souls, you suffering saints, what you have heard from my lips, and lead you still to press on, to endure all things that may come upon you, and patiently and submissively carry the cross, as looking forward to the crown, and thus be willing, and more than willing, to follow in Christ's footsteps and be conformed to his suffering image here, in the sweet hope and blessed confidence of seeing him as he is hereafter, and being conformed to his glorious likeness in the bright realms of one eternal day!

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